

**Constitution Of  
First United Church Of Christ  
207 WEST HORAH STREET  
SALISBURY, N. C.**



**ADOPTED JULY 11, 1971**



## **Article I. Name**

1. The name of this church shall be First United Church of Christ of the United Church of Christ located in Salisbury, State of North Carolina.

## **Article II. Purpose**

1. The avowed purpose of this church shall be to worship God, to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ, and to celebrate the Sacraments, to realize Christian fellowship and unity within this church and the Church Universal; to render loving service toward mankind; and to strive for righteousness, justice, and peace.

## **Article III. Polity**

1. This church shall be a part of the United Church of Christ and it shall sustain that relationship to the United Church of Christ described in those portions of the Constitution and By-Laws of the United Church of Christ, adopted July 4, 1961 and as subsequently amended, relating to local churches.

2. The government of this church is vested in its members, who exercise the right of control in all its affairs, subject, however, to Laws of the State of North Carolina relating to ecclesiastical corporations.

## **Article IV. Faith and Covenant**

Faith — This church acknowledges as its sole Head, Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the Savior of man. It acknowledges as brothers in Christ all who share in this confession. It looks to the Word of God in the Scriptures, and to the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, to prosper its creative and redemptive work in the world. It claims as its own the faith of the historic Church expressed in the ancient creeds and reclaimed in the basic insights of the Protestant Reformers. It affirms the responsibility of the Church in each generation to make this faith its own. In accordance with the teaching of our Lord and the practice prevailing among evangelical Christians, it recognizes two Sacraments: Baptism, and the Holy Communion (Lord's Supper).

One expression of this faith is:

**Statement of Faith:**

We believe in God, the Eternal Spirit, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and our Father, and to his deeds we testify:

He calls the worlds into being, creates man in his own image and sets before him the ways of life and death.

He seeks in holy love to save all people from aimlessness and sin.

He judges men and nations by his righteous will declared through prophets and apostles.

In Jesus Christ, the man of Nazareth, our crucified and risen Lord, he has come to us and shared our common lot, conquering sin and death and reconciling the world to himself.

He bestows upon us his Holy Spirit, creating and renewing the Church of Jesus Christ, binding in covenant faithful people of all ages, tongues, and races.

He calls us into his Church to accept the cost and joy of discipleship, to be his servants in the service of men, to proclaim the gospel to all the world and resist the powers of evil, to share in Christ's baptism and eat at his table, to join him in his passion and victory.

He promises to all who trust him forgiveness of sins and fullness of grace, courage in the struggle for justice and peace, his presence in trial and rejoicing, and eternal life in his kingdom which has no end.

Blessing and honor, glory and power be unto him.

Amen.

In keeping with the tradition of this congregation we accept the historic creeds of the Christian Church such as the Apostles', and Nicene, and believe them to contain the sincere beliefs of our Christian faith. We, furthermore, feel that these historic creeds and the Statement of Faith should be used with a degree of regularity in the worship services of our church.

**COVENANT** — We covenant one with another to seek and respond to the Word and the will of God, We purpose to walk together in the ways of the Lord, made known and to be made known to us. We hold it to be the mission of the Church to witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ in all the world, while worshipping God. and striving for

truth, justice, and peace. As did our fathers, we depend on the Holy Spirit to lead and empower us. We pray for the coming of the kingdom of God, and we look with faith toward the triumph of righteousness and eternal life.

## Article V. Membership

1. Membership in this church shall be open to any person who has been baptized, has been confirmed, or has made public confession, or reprofession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. In accordance with the gospel covenant which binds in a unity 'faithful people of all ages, tongues, and races,' membership is open to all. Applications for membership in this church shall be made through and subject to the approval of the Consistory.

2. Members shall pledge themselves to attend the regular worship of the church and the celebration of the Holy Communion; to live the Christian life; to share in the life and work of the church; to contribute to its support and benevolences; and to seek diligently the spiritual welfare of the membership and the community.

3. Any member may, on his own request, be granted a letter of transfer. If wishing to join a body not in fellowship with this church, he may be dismissed with a certificate of church membership.

If, because of change of faith or for other valid reasons, a member requests in writing to be released from his membership obligations the Consistory shall grant the request and terminate his membership. Such a request shall be issued by the pastor or secretary of the church with the approval of the Consistory.

4. A member whose address has long been unknown, or for a period of two years, in spite of spiritual care, has not attended the church's worship or contributed to its support may, by the vote of the Consistory, be removed from the membership roll and placed on a conditional list.

A member whose name has been placed on such a conditional list shall be notified of such action, in writing, by the Consistory. If after the expiration of the third year

the relationship remains unchanged the name shall be dropped from the conditional roll unless further action is taken by the Consistory.

The above ruling would not hold under certain extenuating circumstances such as: faithful members who now find it difficult to attend because of age; the sick or infirm; young members away at institutions of higher education; young members in the armed services; young members in the process of establishing their homes in new communities, or members away from Salisbury who yearly make written request that their membership be retained on the roll of First Church. Members permanently living away from Salisbury and access to First Church are strongly urged, as soon as possible, to affiliate with some other Christian church where they reside.

5. If a member has been removed from the roll of First Church for any reason he shall have the right to appeal his cause, in person, to the Consistory. Notification of his desire for such an appeal must be presented to the pastor or church president in writing.

## **Article VI. Governing Body**

1. The governing body of this church shall be the membership assembled in church meeting, following a general notification of the membership at least one week prior to the meeting date. This notification shall state the purpose of this church meeting. Following the above legal notification the members of the governing body present shall constitute a quorum. The vote of the majority members present at the meeting shall be the action of the church except when calling a pastor. (Exception — see Article VIII, Paragraph 6).

## **Article VII Consistory**

1. The Consistory shall be the executive body of this church. It shall be composed of the pastor or pastors, 10 elders, and 12 deacons duly elected by the church. One-half of its membership shall constitute a quorum.

2. Each year 5 elders and 7 deacons shall be elected by the majority vote cast at a church meeting. Two of the

deacons shall be members of the Youth Ministry who have attained at least Sophomore status in high school. The regular elders and deacons shall be elected for a two-year term and shall not be eligible to succeed themselves until after the elapse of one year. Representatives of the Youth Ministry shall be elected for a one-year term and shall not be eligible to succeed themselves. Any member in good standing shall be eligible to serve on the Consistory after having been a member of this church at least one year. The terms of members of the Consistory shall coincide with the calendar year.

3. Nominations shall be made for the offices of elders and deacons by a committee appointed in September by the Consistory. This committee shall make its report to the Consistory at its October meeting. Public notice of such nominations shall be given to the church by newsletter, bulletin, or mail. By the first Sunday in November a church meeting shall be held to receive further nominations from the floor. Such nominations should only be made after receiving consent of the proposed nominees. The election of new elders and deacons will be held no later than the second Sunday in November.

4. The newly elected Consistory shall meet in the latter part of November for organization. Officers to be elected shall be president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer, and Building Fund treasurer. To further the purposes of the church, committees such as Property, Worship, Youth Council, Stewardship and Finance, Church and Ministry, Christian Education, Community Concerns, Fellowship, and Evangelism shall be established by the Consistory prior to January 1. Additions and deletions may be made at the discretion of the Consistory. The pastor(s) and president of the Consistory may, by virtue of their positions, attend meetings of all committees appointed by the Consistory.

Three trustees, whose function shall be to sign all legal documents in behalf of the church and at the direction of the Consistory, or to perform other approved functions, shall be appointed by the Consistory.

5. Elders and deacons are members of the church elected by the church and ordained to and

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5. Elders and deacons are members of the church elected by the church and ordained to and

installed in their offices. This shall be done in the presence of the church on or before the last Sunday of the calendar year. They shall assist and support the Pastor in the spiritual affairs of the church. They shall provide for the elements for the Lord's Supper and, when invited by the Pastor, shall aid in their distribution. They shall have jurisdiction in matters of discipline except in the case of the Pastor. Elders and Deacons shall take heed to the high calling of their office, guarding faithfully all the spiritual interests of the church, maintaining order in the house of God, visiting the sick, and ministering to the edification and comfort of all.

6. Vacancies on the Consistory shall be filled by the Consistory for the unexpired terms.

7. The Consistory shall be the policy-making body and shall transact the business of the church, make provision for the determining and raising of the current expense budget as well as for Our Christian World Mission and other benevolences, and provide for the auditing of financial accounts and for the adequate support of the staff. It shall keep a complete and accurate record of its proceedings, be the custodian of all church records, and report to the church at its regular and special meetings. All acts and deliberations of the Consistory are subject to the will of and revision by the governing body.

8. The Consistory shall instruct the proper officers on all fiscal matters, and shall review monthly such expenditures.

9. The Consistory may authorize unbudgeted expenditures if funds are available. If necessary, the Consistory shall have the right to borrow up to an amount equal to one-twelfth of the current annual budget to meet contingencies. Any amount over this shall require a vote of the church.

10. The Consistory shall meet at least ten times a year for the transaction of such business as may properly come before it. Special meetings are subject to the Chairman's call.

## Article VIII Pastor

1. It will be the responsibility of the Church and

Ministry Committee, plus additional members appointed by the Consistory, to seek a candidate for the vacancy in the office of pastor.

2. As soon as a pastoral vacancy occurs it shall be reported to the Conference Executive through the Association Executive.

3. In filling a vacancy or in securing a supply minister for the period of vacancy, the Church and Ministry Committee shall seek the counsel of the Association Executive. It shall be understood that the supply interim minister shall not be considered for the vacancy in the office of pastor.

4. The Church and Ministry Committee may request the Conference Executive, through the Association Executive, to secure relevant information about any minister whom it wishes to consider for the vacancy.

5. Any minister may confer with the Conference Executive concerning the pastoral vacancy. At the minister's request, his name shall be submitted through the Association Executive for consideration by the local church committee.

6. Through the Consistory, the Church and Ministry Committee shall present to the church the name of the candidate it recommends to fill the vacancy. No more than one candidate shall be presented to the church at a time for consideration. A two-thirds majority vote of the Governing Body shall constitute a call.

7. In the call, the terms of the relationship shall be stated, including the agreement of the church to participate in the Pension Fund of the United Church of Christ, the Ministers' Health Insurance Program, and other terms agreed between the candidate and the committee, following guidelines set forth by the Consistory. The minister, the church, the Association, and the Conference Executive shall each receive a copy of the call.

8. When a minister accepts a call to this church, the church and he shall join in requesting the Association to arrange for a service of installation. A report of this service shall be signed by the proper officer of the Association and by the Conference Executive, and copies shall be

sent to the Secretary of the United Church of Christ and to the Council for Church and Ministry.

9. The Pastor shall be elected for an indefinite period. In order to terminate this relationship a 30-day notice shall be given by either party. This may be altered by mutual agreement. The procedure shall be in accordance with the Constitution and By-Laws of the United Church of Christ.

10. When either party decides to terminate the relationship, the termination shall be by action of the Consistory, and notice of such termination shall be sent by the Chairman of the Consistory to the Conference Executive through the Association Executive, for appropriate action.

11. The normal retirement age for the pastor shall be 65 years. He may, however, be hired on a year-to-year basis following this age if by mutual agreement of pastor and church.

12. Brotherly discipline of the Pastor shall be in conformity with the Constitution and By-Laws of the United Church of Christ.

13. The church may at its discretion choose an Associate or Assistant Pastor (s). If there is an associate or assistant pastor it shall be understood he shall not be eligible to succeed the pastor in case of resignation, and it shall be furthermore understood that he should seek another place of employment as soon as feasible.

## Article IX. Cabinet

1. The Consistory shall provide for a church cabinet, whose purpose shall be for coordination and planning of the total church program. Its membership shall consist of the pastor or pastors, president of the Consistory, president of the Church Women, presidents of the Youth Fellowship, Youth Director, Church School Superintendent, and three members-at-large. The pastor shall be the coordinator of the cabinet. It shall meet quarterly and shall closely study the total program of the local church and devise the implementation of any aspects of this program. It shall report its findings to the Consistory.

## **Article X. Dissolution of Property**

1. If this church should ever disband the following shall be the guideline in disposition of the property: upon dissolution of the church, its assets and all property and interests of which it shall then be possessed, including any devise, bequest, gift or grant contained in any will or other instrument, in trust or otherwise, made before or after such dissolution, shall be transferred to the Western North Carolina Association of the Southern Conference of the United Church of Christ.

## **Article XI. Church Meetings**

1. The Annual Meeting of this church shall be held no later than the first Sunday of February. A written annual report containing the financial and statistical reports of the congregation shall be provided for each family prior to this meeting. The president of the Consistory, who has served during the past year, will report on the state of the church and its activities.

2. Special church meetings may be called by the Consistory, or by a petition to the Consistory signed by not less than one-third of the members. The Consistory shall call such meetings within three weeks from receipt of the petition, and adequate notice of such meeting shall be sent to the membership by the Secretary.

## **Article XII. Rules of Order**

1. ROBERT'S RULES OF ORDER shall be the parliamentary authority for all matters of procedure not specifically covered by this Constitution and/or By-Laws.

## **Article XIII. Amendments**

1. Amendments to this Constitution and/or By-Laws may be made at any duly called church meeting by a two-thirds affirmative vote of the members present. A written announcement of the text of the proposed amendment (s) shall be made by newsletter, bulletin, or mail to the church membership at least two weeks prior to the meeting.

## **AMENDMENT**

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